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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 001898

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [HA](#)  
SUBJECT: LAVALAS MIFFED AT PREVAL OVER ELECTORAL COUNCIL  
PROCESS, HOLDS CONVENTION

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 1853

PORT AU PR 00001898 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The pro-Aristide party Lavalas is angry that President Preval has not consulted them bilaterally in the process to form a new Provisional Electoral Council (CEP). Influential Lavalas Deputy Jonas Coffy believes Preval is trying to politically marginalize Lavalas to help pave the way for Prime Minister Alexis to succeed Preval as President. Feeling excluded, Lavalas may contest the new Provisional CEP when it is announced. Lavalas held a congress November 24 that called for the return to Haiti of ex-President Aristide. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Poloff met with influential Lavalas Deputy and Chamber of Deputies Finance Committee President Jonas Coffy November ¶14. Deputy Coffy reported that Preval's failure to consult Lavalas on the formation of a new Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) has left Lavalas feeling alienated and politically targeted. Coffy termed Preval's actions a failure to play by the rules of participatory democracy and a ploy to minimize the movement's popularity. Deputy Coffy argued that Lavalas representation in parliament and in the government (it has one minister, Minister of Planning Max Bellrive) meant that Lavalas deserved its own place at the table in the consultation process to form a new Provisional CEP.

¶3. (C) Coffy claimed that President Preval had ignored several official requests from the Lavalas leadership -- most recently on November 6 -- to be included in the consultations. Exasperated at the continuing political exclusion, Lavalas scheduled a national Congress in Cap Haitien for Nov. 24. Coffy asserted that the agenda of the congress would be to decide on the party's reaction to their exclusion from consultations on the new CEP, and electing a new national leader/representative for Lavalas. (Note: Despite Lavalas' claims that Preval is shunning the party, the President continues to use individual Lavalas partisans for specific purposes. Former Aristide supporter, Cite Soleil resident and Lavalas activist Rene Momplaisir is currently a 'Mission Chief' for the Preval Administration, tasked with empowering grassroots organizations in disenfranchised communities. End Note.)

¶4. (SBU) MINUSTAH told Polcouns Nov. 29 that MINUSTAH sources in Cap Haitien reported a Lavalas convention in Cap Haitien

Nov. 24 calling for the return to Haiti of Jean Bertrand Aristide. MINUSTAH estimated the crowd at 8,000. Embassy contacted local sources in Cap Haitien, who reported the rally was held in an indoor sports arena with several thousand attendees, although the figure of 8,000 appears inflated. The congress does not appear to have elected any national representatives. All sources agree that the meeting did feature a prominent Lavalas figure in the north, Nahoum Marcelus, who has been linked to gang-related violence in Port au Prince after the departure of Aristide. Also speaking at the congress were Lavalas activists Father Gerard Jean-Juste and Annette August (aka So Anne), both linked to human rights violations under Aristide. Haitian national media remained silent about the event until Haitian National Television (TNH) carried a report November 29 and 30. That report noted that Marcelus, dressed in African garb, called on the people of Haiti to emulate "world leaders" such as Che Gueverra, Fidel Castro, and revolutionary Burkina Faso leader Thomas Sankara. Jean-Juste and Annette August recalled the "kidnapping" of then-President Aristide and urged party faithful to remain united behind the demand for his immediate return to Haiti. TNH reported that many committees were unable to complete their work for lack of time and because of internal disagreements.

15. (SBU) Deputy Coffy opined that Preval's actions are part of a plan to prepare a Lespwa candidate, incumbent Prime Minister Alexis, to succeed Preval in office. According to Deputy Coffy, evidence of this plan is the recent formation of a political party, ''Seau D'eau'' (literally Bucket of Water) by Prime Minister Alexis and Jena Josef of Lespwa. (Note: Deputy Coffy claimed this party was formed in September 2007 and Prime Minister Alexis' engagement in this new party is mere subterfuge since Alexis is still strongly affiliated with Lespwa. End Note.) Deputy Coffy questioned the source of the party's start-up funds and suggested it was

PORT AU PR 00001898 002.2 OF 002

a breach of administrative and constitutional ethics for an incumbent Prime Minister with access to state funds to establish a political party without providing a clear and detailed account of the source of the funding.

16. (SBU) Comment: Lavalas believes it deserves more attention from the Preval administration. Preval's refusal to consult with them independently of the other political parties on reform of the Provisional CEP is hardly surprising. Lavalas is part of the ''Council of Political Parties,'' one of the two political party groupings canvassed by the President for nominees to the new Provisional CEP (reftel). Preval has also remained deaf to pleas by the coalition Lespwa (the political vehicle Preval rode in his campaign for the Presidency) for a Lespwa representative on the Provisional CEP (reftel). Despite Lavalas support for Preval during the Presidential campaign, Preval as President has judiciously kept his distance from Lavalas elected officials. Deep factionalism within Lavalas persists. Lavalas may oppose the new Provisional Electoral Council when the next iteration of that body is announced, although this opposition will hardly suffice to paralyze or obstruct that body. End comment.  
SANDERSON